

CAUCASIA AND CENTRAL ASIA

The question of British troops in Iran remains. When most of the British detachments were withdrawn from Russia in 1919, British forces in Iran shrank also. In 1920 the Bolshevik landing at Enzeli, of which more will be said later, complicated the problem of evacuation, and the British troops remained in some parts of the country through 1920. After their successful *coup d'etat* in February, 1921, Seyyid Zia and Reza Khan appealed to the British not to evacuate their troops for the time being.⁵² Yet despite the fact that Soviet troops were by that time on Iranian territory, the last British troops were evacuated in May, 1921. The consolidation of Reza Khan's authority, although he repudiated the Anglo-Iranian Treaty of 1919, was in the British view a welcome development. It signified a step in the right direction, a step toward the assertion of Iranian independence both against British and Soviet influence. Reza Khan's firm dealings with the Russians in the north of the country as well as with various rebellious elements constituted a guarantee that Iran would not become a base for anti-British operations. And that was all that, traditionally, Britain expected from Iran. The problem now was whether Iran would be able to maintain and solidify her neutral position. Nothing short of this would, in the long run, satisfy British policy. The British were ready, after Curzon's overzealous and unsuccessful attempt to establish a protectorate, to revert to their old attitude—that of keeping politically and militarily out of Iran, while trying to secure, through normal channels, economic advantages. The big unknown was the ultimate design of Soviet Russia. Her first moves in Iran seemed to prove that the hands-off attitude

adopted by the
British was not shared by Moscow.

^s J. M. Balfour, *Recent Happenings in Persia* (London, 1922), p.
244.